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ArtWorks! had scheduled the Zina Bethune Dance Company to be featured in July, before Zina's untimely death last February. As a tribute to Zina and her incredible work as an artist and educator, we proudly give you:

A BEAUTIFUL LIFE – ZINA BETHUNE

by Tommy Monje

For all of us that knew Zina, the world changed the day we heard of her passing. The sun didn't seem as bright, or the oceans as blue and happiness seemed just out of our reach. We had lost our friend, our mentor, and our inspiration.

Tragically, Zina was taken from us on February 12, 2012, by a hit-and-run accident. Zina loved animals, and pulled over on the side of the road to come to the aid of a wounded animal, when she was struck by on-going traffic. She was pronounced dead on arrival.

Zina Bethune had an extensive and inspirational career beginning at the age of six. She starred in Martin Scorsese's first motion picture "Who's Knocking At My Door," the television series "The Nurses," and was also a regular guest star on the "Judy Garland Show." On Broadway, she played the starring role in "Grand Hotel." Zina danced with the New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, and various international dance companies.



In 1981, Zina founded [Bethune Theatredanse](#), the first professional dance program in America to create a participatory dance program for disabled youth, called [Infinite Dreams](#). Zina often said: "*Infinite Dreams* is for all people and is about the spirit and joy of dance—your spirit is not disabled, why should what you do be disabled?"

Zina led her multi-media company on international tours and even received a special invitation to perform at the White House. Zina achieved all of this while being "differently – abled" with Dysplastic hips, Scoliosis and Lymphedema. "Differently-abled" was Zina's way to explain "how it feels to be disabled yet live with the fire of an artistic spirit that is in us all."

Zina was a pioneering force for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Arts and Disability Movement inclusion guidelines for the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. Zina's work with arts and disability is now a worldwide movement and has received commendations from three U.S. Presidents, four Los Angeles Mayors, Senators, Governors, the Los Angeles Unified School District, Actors Equity, and The United Nations.



Zina is survived by her husband, Sean Feeley; her mother, stage, TV and film actor, Ivy Bethune; countless loving friends, and over 8,000 graduates of the *Infinite Dreams* program.



A BEAUTIFUL LEGACY – CONTINUES

After careful consideration, the board of directors at Bethune Theatredanse decided to continue the legacy that Zina began so many years ago. Our first step was to insure to our students, families, and alumni that we will continue on in her memory, and the second step was to receive the support of our longtime community partners, of which, the California Arts Council (CAC) was the first to pledge their continued support. And thanks to the CAC, our programs in Pasadena and Orange County will continue to offer high-quality dance and drama instruction at a low price (and in some areas free).



The mission of our *Infinite Dreams* program is to teach our students that the arts of dance and drama can transcend all the physical and stereotypical limitations. After all, just because the body is disabled, it doesn't mean that the spirit is disabled. And many of our students embody that very spirit. Meet Tom Doyle: A 14-year old who's been handed a lemon in the form of Cerebellar Ataxia, a disability that impairs coordination. However, he doesn't seem to know it because as his mother Kathleen Doyle says, "Tom doesn't allow his disability to define him." Your first impression of Tom is that he's taken that lemon and turned it into the best tasting lemonade on his block and you can't help but to be inspired for his zeal for life. Already in his young life, he's become an accomplished artist, movie director, and with the help of *Infinite Dreams* - **a dancer!**



Cerebellar Ataxia is the impaired coordination of voluntary movements due to underdevelopment of the brain's cerebellum and challenges Tom's balance. Although he can stand for short periods of time, Tom prefers to use his wheelchair, and "use it" he does! Tom has created some of the most amazing paintings utilizing his wheelchair wheels and his hands.

If you ask Kathleen Doyle what she loves about having her son participate in *Infinite Dreams*, she'll tell you that she thinks it's a "good way for him to express himself" and that it "helps with his self-esteem." Ask Kathleen to provide pictures of Tom's first performance with *Infinite Dreams*, and she can't because as she says, "I was too choked up to take pictures... I couldn't believe how Zina had incorporated movement to Tom's disability." This speaks to the heart of the mission that Bethune Theatredanse award-winning arts education program for disabled children and youth *Infinite Dreams* provides. Simply put, we help our students turn their "disability into dance-ability".



Zina always said:

"Dance is not how far a child can reach their legs or arms. It is the creation, the sharing, and the partaking that is the beauty. We don't ask how much you can move; we simply say... come dance, act and perform with us."

- Zina Bethune,
Founder and Artistic Director, *Infinite Dreams*



For more information about *Infinite Dreams* please go to www.bethuneinfinitedreams.org or call (323)874-0481.

Non-Art photos taken by Tommy Monje
Art photos taken by The Doyle Family

Bethune Theatredanse receives funding from the California Arts Council's [Artists in Schools Program](#), which supports residencies in schools, and is managed by Wayne Cook wcook@cac.ca.gov.